

ROBBERS OF GOD

NO. 2156

A SERMON
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“Will a man rob God? Yet you have robbed Me!”
Malachi 3:8.*

These prophets would have made poor royal chaplains if those who dwell in kings' houses have to use smooth speech. Malachi here charges the people with robbery and with the very worst form of it, namely, sacrilege. He speaks for the Lord and says, “Will a man rob God? Yet you have robbed Me.” It ill becomes the messengers of heaven to be the flatterers of rebels. If they should descend to such baseness, they might well expect that their Maker would take them away. The Lord sends His servants to speak the truth in all its plainness, to denounce sin with all fidelity and to publish God's sentence of condemnation against those who continue in their iniquity. Men's souls are to be dealt with honestly and, if need be, sternly. God's truth is to be handled with vigorous plainness, for the Lord has said, “He that has My Word, let him speak My Word faithfully.”

Yet notice that Malachi constantly mixes promises with threats and while he is like a sharp two-edged sword against the evil of the people, he is as the balm of Gilead to those who feel their disease of sin and desire to be healed of it. Between the peals of thundering warning there are silver showers of gracious encouragement! He has tempest for sin but peace for those who confess it. Almost the next verse after our text is, “Bring you all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in My house and prove Me now herewith, says the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing that there shall not be room enough to receive it.” Faithful ministries have in them a blending of the law to drive with the gospel to draw. Brothers, we must use the law for its ordained purpose. If we omit the discovery and denunciation of evil, we have neglected a very essential part of our duty, for if men are not convinced of sin, how will they desire pardon? If conscience is not awakened, to what can we address ourselves? It is in vain to bring forth the promises, for the promises are no sweeter to the self-righteous than bread to a man filled with dainties. What cares a man for justification by faith who has the conceit that he is already justified by his own acts? Only those who feel their wounds will plead for heavenly surgery. I pray that I may so preach this morning that while I shall not be harsh in spirit, I may bear hard upon those spirits which are resting in their own innocence! I wish so to speak that we shall, all of us, see our own shortcomings so as to be startled into confession and prayer, and led humbly to trust in the great sacrifice!

It is a very serious charge which the prophet brings in the text; he calls men thieves and robbers. He charges the whole *nation* with robbing God. We ought seriously to consider a charge so serious and, especially since at this day it may lie against ourselves. We shall come to this consideration, noticing in the text *astonishment indicated*: “Will a man rob God?” The prophet asks in amazement, as if such a thing could not be. Secondly, we shall spend a little time in pressing home the solemn charge. This will come under the head of *confession assisted*. We shall mention, in detail, certain forms which this robbery may take in order that we may search our own conduct and see whether we are guilty of the crime. If guilty, may we be moved to repentance of the sin and faith in the glorious Sin-Bearer through whom we may be pardoned, even though guilty of treason against the King of kings! Lastly, we shall help the penitent to the right way under the head of *repentance directed*. If we have robbed God, though the crime is, in itself, most terrible, it is not beyond the reach of mercy. There is forgiveness with God for this, also, for the blood of Jesus Christ, God's dear Son, cleanses us from all sin. I shall speak about the way by which forgiveness may be obtained. Oh, for the Holy Spirit to guide mind and heart and tongue in this solemn matter!

I. First, then, in the text there is **ASTONISHMENT INDICATED**; “Will a man rob God?” The question is asked as if it were improbable, if not impossible. A man, an insignificant creature, dependent

upon his God for the breath whereby he lives; will he rob God, the good, the just, the great and terrible One who can crush him in a moment? “Will a man rob God?”

In the first place, the astonishment arises from the fact that *the action is altogether unnatural*. It is illogical and self-condemnatory. If we have a God, how dare we rob Him? Look at the heathen; they must have a God; and since they know no better god, the heathen make to themselves gods of wood, of stone or of clay. When they have made these false gods they pay them homage as if, indeed, they were gods! For them they build temples, altars and shrines. Nations in the olden times had no banks, but treasures deposited in temples were safe from robbery. It was not supposed that a thief would break into a temple; to do so was a flagrant crime. There was awe upon the minds of men which rendered it an audacious felony to rob their deities, false though they were! Men who would have plundered palaces, kept back from the temple of Jupiter, or Minerva, or Diana! No man would rob even an image which he thought to be a god. If the *heathen* would not rob their gods, shall we dare to do so who have so much light as to the one living and true God? Will men who profess and call themselves Christians venture upon a profanity from which the heathen retreated with a shudder? Even Goths and Vandals, in the days of their invasions of civilization, have been known to stand back at the door of a church when the minister of Christ has come forward to protest against its plunder. If the fierce heathen learned to respect the holy place, surely it will be a high felony if we, knowing the true God, dare to break in upon the sacred enclosure of His honor and rob Him of His glory which is His spiritual treasure! To rob God is a superfluity of naughtiness, an extravagance of crime, an excess of presumptuous provocation! Can man be guilty of it? “Will a man rob God?”

In the next place, to rob God is *terribly daring*. If the thief robs his fellow man, who is his equal, he has cause to fear the law; he should reckon upon being searched out by vigilance and punished by justice. But what are the police and the magistrates and the judges of this lower sphere compared with the Judge of all the earth? “Will a man rob God?” The crime is the more audacious because done in God’s presence. If the robber could go behind the Lord’s back to rob Him, his insolence would not be so manifest; but since the Lord’s eyes are everywhere present, the offense is rank and impudent! The worst of thieves will not often steal from us to our face; robbery is done in the dark, or on the sly, or by a cunning trick. But since no place is behind the back of God, and there is no spot where His eyes are not observant, when a man robs God, he does it before His face! “Will a man rob God?” What? God, whose eyes are fixed upon him? Will he thus defy his Maker? We lift up our hands in amazement that such a crime should be even conceived, much less committed! Yet, before I have done this morning, I shall have to show that many of us, in different ways, have been guilty of this audacious crime. “Will a man rob God?”

Furthermore, *it is shamefully ungrateful!* God has made us and not we ourselves, therefore we are bound to serve Him and every righteous instinct forbids our robbing Him. Shall a creature injure its Creator? If we live, it is by His forbearance. “Will a man rob God” who spares him? If saved, it must be by His divine redemption; will a man rob his Redeemer? If provided with food for the body, it must be by God’s daily bounty; will a man rob his constant Benefactor? O preserver of men, will men rob You? Believers in the Lord Jesus, God is your Father, and from you this crime would have a sevenfold heinousness! Will a man rob his own Father? Can it be that one in whose heart there pulses the life of God would be guilty of such an infamy as to rob God? I fear it is so, but in such a case it is ingratitude of so black a type as to be well-near incredible. Ingratitude in every land and in every age has been abhorred of just men. It is a fiendish vice. It is at once contemptible and unendurable; we not only despise, but hate it. Every voice hoots down ingratitude. Yet when a man robs God, it is *ingratitude* written in capital letters; ingratitude that will sink the soul into the lowest hell. “Will a man rob God?” The Lord deliver us from conduct so base!

It is senselessly injurious to the man himself. To rob God is to plunder ourselves. The man who lives for God does, indeed, and of truth, in the highest sense, live to his own happiness. He that robs God of himself robs himself of God and to lose God is to miss our highest good. To rob God is to waste our own substance, yes, to write one’s own death-warrant. Belshazzar takes from Jehovah the holy vessels and drinks wine from them at his drunken banquet. And it is written, “That night was Belshazzar slain.” When a man robs God by withholding more than is meet from the poor, it tends to poverty. None rob God and really prosper. There are those who waste their substance upon their own lusts and so rob God;

but their profligacy tends to disease, sadness of heart and eternal ruin. When a man robs God he is despoiling his own estate. Every penny that is withheld from God's treasury is put into a bag that is full of holes. Such gain impoverishes. He that *serves* God brings a blessing upon himself and his posterity; he that robs God should listen to the words which follow my text: "You are cursed with a curse: for you have robbed Me." Because of this comes the devourer which swallows up the estate, the waster that eats up the increase of the field and the destroyer which shipwrecks the result of commerce. If a man knew that when he robbed God he was cutting the throat of his own happiness; burying in a wretched sepulcher his peace for the present, and his hope for the future; surely he would pause before he laid his hand upon the Lord's heritage! In the sight of the curse that goes with the injustice, "Will a man rob God?"

Once more; "Will a man rob God" *when he is so certain of punishment?* A man who is a thief hopes to escape, for human search can be baffled. If he were sure that he would be taken, tried and condemned, the burglar would not break into the house; but he hopes by dexterity to evade, or by false statements to escape from the hand of the law; and therefore he ventures upon the crime. Now, no man can hope to escape when he robs *God*. O robber, where will you go? In what secret place will you hide yourself? It was said of a Roman emperor, when Rome was at its highest power that for him the whole world was but one great jail in which all who offended Caesar were prisoners. Wherever an offender fled, the Roman law would reach him. For him there was no foreign land which could protect him in exile, no distant country in which he could live unseen. Once obnoxious to Caesar, he was a doomed man. And where, O rebel against God, can you go? If you should mount to heaven, there He reigns in splendor! If you should dive to hell, there He rules in terror! Far off upon the sea His hand would reach you. Though your ship should fly before the tempest, He would outstrip you. Darkness affords no concealment and the grave no shelter. God is everywhere and His justice finds out His enemies. Thus says the Lord, "Though they hide themselves in the top of Carmel, I will search and take them out from there; and though they are hid from My sight in the bottom of the sea, there will I command the serpent and he shall bite them." "Will a man rob God" when He thus involves Himself in sure detection and punishment? Yes, the robber of God is already detected! God has seen him in the act! The witness against him is unerring. "Will a man rob God?" How can he be so foolhardy? Will he stretch out his hand against God and strengthen himself against the Almighty? Let him be wise and no more dream of robbing the infinite one.

Put all these things together and I think you will share the prophet's astonishment at the crime of robbing God; and you will earnestly pray, "God grant that we may never be guilty of such wickedness." We hope we have been kept from the worst forms of this sin, for we regard it with abhorrence, as the deadliest of evils.

II. And now, secondly, I am coming to closer quarters with you than under the first head. Now we occupy ourselves with CONFESSION ASSISTED. I would aid my hearers in examining their lives and hearts, holding a candle for conscience.

I will mention, first, *common forms of this robbery*. Here are some of them. Many men, throughout a life which has been prolonged by God's forbearance, have never given to God even the semblance of worship. Neither in their hearts, nor in private prayer, nor in their families have they paid worship to the Lord. They have never once set up an altar in their family, nor called upon the name of the Lord. It may be there are men and women here who are parents and heads of households and yet after 30, 40, 50 or more years they have never rendered unto God the glory due unto His name. Never have they sung His praises with delight, nor offered prayer in humility. The holy Name has never been on their lips except in carelessness or profanity. Do I speak too roughly when I take such a person by the hand and say to him, "You have robbed God throughout your whole life"? He made you but He has had nothing from you. He has fed you day by day and in His hands your breath is, but you have done Him no service. If a man buys a cow, he counts upon its milk. If he keeps a horse, he looks for its labor. If he owns a dog, he expects it to come to his whistle. Will God make you, feed you, keep you in life and bless you; and is He to have no return? "Will a man rob God?" Many of you think if you maintain your families, pay your debts and live soberly, all is done that you need think about. God is nowhere and nothing to you. As far as you can do so you have put God out of the world; you live as if there were no God. My friend, this

cannot be right. This injustice to the greatest and the best of beings; this lack of thought of Him who daily thinks of you, must be wrong! Bow your head in shame and confess your fault at once!

Many are in the habit of robbing God in another way. When God prospers them and things go well with them, you may hear them exclaim, "I am a lucky fellow! Bless my lucky stars!" By speeches of this sort they rob God of the thanks they owe Him. It is silly and wicked to talk about a fictitious power called fortune, or good luck! Though the hand of God is distinctly to be seen in the prosperity which men enjoy, they refuse to see it and talk of chance! God forgive you! You are robbing Him of His praise.

Others, when they prosper in the world, pay homage to themselves, their industry, their prudence or their business tact. Self-made men they call themselves. Self-made men are, as a rule, very badly made; it would be a great mercy if they could be broken up and made anew in Christ Jesus. But when a man begins to brag and boast of what he has gathered by his own genius, he robs God of the honor due to His goodness. Look at Nebuchadnezzar; he walks through his great city; he marks the broad walls of Babylon and admires the hanging gardens, bearing forests high in the air and he exclaims, "Behold this great Babylon which I have built!" A few weeks after, as a maniac, he was eating grass with oxen, having been driven from the dwellings of men. When his hair had grown like eagles' feathers and his nails like birds' claws, *then* he knew how soon the glorious Lord of heaven and earth can lay the mighty monarch level with the beasts. *Then* he humbled himself and blessed the Most High! Then he praised and honored Him that lives forever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion! I do not wish that you should be bereft of your wits, but you may be. Perhaps, if your best reason returned, even that which pride has, for awhile, driven away, it might serve the purpose I desire; for you to remember that it is God that gives you power to get wealth. Prosperity, however much it may come by your own industry, is, nevertheless; when you get to the bottom of it; to be ascribed to the great favor of God who permits you to enjoy health and strength; to exercise your industry and to carry out your undertakings. By forgetfulness of the fountain of all blessings, a man robs God.

I must add here that even men, who, in their hearts, fear the Lord, may be guilty of this sin. If the Lord has seen fit to make you useful, it will be horrible if you take the praise of it to yourself. It is very easy for the preacher, when his congregation is large, to think, "This is due to my eloquence." And when there are conversions he may be wicked enough to whisper to himself, "This is due to my fidelity." Ah, me! Shall we sacrifice to our own net because it is full of fish? Shall the axe that fells the tree glorify itself against the hand that uses it? The Lord grant we may never fall into this sin! Are you seeking to win the souls of your children for Christ? Yet maybe you do not gather large classes, nor see many conversions. May it not be because the Lord could not trust you with great success? Some workers must not succeed for it would be at the cost of their souls; they would take the glory to themselves and so rob God. I knew a man whom God greatly blessed in a certain place, so that his preaching turned it upside down. He built a large house of prayer and filled it with eager hearers. There was such a stir as had not been known before. He was a successful soul-winner, *and he knew it*. Alas, he knew it, and you could see that he knew it! He was a man of remarkable ability as a speaker, *and he knew it*. He was eminent for influence, and his speech and bearing betrayed that eminence. Where is he now? I cannot tell you. But there came a sudden stop to usefulness; a foolish action; and the man became an affliction to the gracious. If we sit up for masters, instead of being obedient servants, we shall be ordered on foreign service, and shall no more see the King's face. Alas, our robbery of God by assuming honor for ourselves may prove that the root of the matter was never in us and that our spiritual power was only lent to us, as it was to Judas, but we were never children of the kingdom. "Will a man rob God?" Ah, me, how common are these offenses! The Lord preserve us from them!

Now I will mention *doctrinal forms* of this evil. "Will a man rob God?" Oh, my friends, how many in these evil days rob God in this fashion! Some deny the godhead of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. I know no greater robbery than to take away from the Ever-blessed Son of God His right to be regarded as equal with God. To think of the eternal Word as only the creature of a day is base robbery! To regard Him whose name is Emmanuel, "God with us," as a mere *teacher* or example, but not, "very God of very God," is treason! If any man here has so robbed the Christ of God, the Lord have mercy upon him. "Will a man rob God?"

Some rob the Holy Spirit of His personality. He is spoken of by them as an *influence*, but not as true God. He is spoken of as, "*It*," instead of, "*He*." And He is not worshipped as one person of the blessed

Trinity in Unity. Too many practically ignore Him and preach as if they could do without His aid. Thus they rob Him of His true position in reference to the things of God. O friends, beware of robbing God the Holy Spirit, for this is to tread on tender ground!

It is possible, also, to rob the divine Father. In preaching the sacrifice of Christ it is possible to extol the Son at the expense of the Father. It will never do to make it appear that Jesus died to make the Father merciful. God the ever-blessed, the first person of the sacred Trinity, is love and therefore He gave His Son to die for men. We are to worship the Son even as we worship the Father! To magnify the love of the Son above the love of the Father would be to rob God! May none of us dishonor any one person of the sacred Three. Concerning each divine person let us sing—

*“Then let us adore, and give Him His right,
All glory and power, and wisdom and might;
All honor and blessing, with angels above,
And thanks never-ceasing, for infinite love.”*

Though we understand not the mystery of the Trinity, let us believe and worship, and so escape the sin of robbing God.

Beloved, some yield to the temptation to limit the legal claims of God. They rob Him of His rights under His just and righteous law. It has been taught by certain divines that God does not require from us perfect obedience to His law, but only asks *sincere* obedience. If we go as far as we can, that will suffice; so they tell us. This is not true, for the law of the Lord stands fast forever, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself.” To tone down the demands of this perfect law and absolve men from their duty to obey every portion of it is to rob God and to teach others to do so. Although by reason of our sinfulness we cannot render perfect obedience, God is not to be blamed for that and neither is He to lose His due. If I cannot pay, yet the debt remains. I am under obligation to the law to keep it. It is written, “Cursed is every one that continues not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.” It is ours to come before God saying, “The law is holy, and just, and good but I am carnal, sold under sin.” If we do not consent unto the law, that it is good, we rob God of His goodness, wisdom, and justice in making such a law.

Not a few rob God, also, by rebelling against His sovereignty. I have known men to bite their lip and grind their teeth in rage when I have been preaching the sovereignty of God. Yet it is true and who is he that replies against God? He will have mercy on whom He will have mercy. He will have compassion on whom He will have compassion. He demands, “Is it not lawful for Me to do what I will with My own?” Men seem to think that God is under obligation to grant salvation to guilty men; that if he saves one He must save all. They talk about rights as if any man had any right before the throne of God except the right to be punished for his sin! Mercy can only be shown to the guilty on the ground of the royal prerogative. It must be the free act of God’s grace, done at His own good pleasure if any guilty man is saved from death. The doctrinaires of today will allow a god, but he must not be King; that is to say, they choose a god who is no god and rather the servant than the ruler of men! We, however, declare on God’s behalf, that “it is not of him that wills, nor of him that runs, but of God that shows mercy”; and at the sound of this doctrine they stamp their feet with rage! They would rob God of His crown and leave Him neither throne nor will. This will not do for me! My heart delights to say, “It is the Lord: let Him do what seems good to Him.” Whatever is *His* pleasure shall by *my* pleasure. Even if the Lord condemns me, I cannot say that He is unjust. But if He has mercy upon me, I must ascribe it wholly to His free and sovereign grace! Rob not God of His sovereignty but rejoice that the Lord reigns and does as He wills.

I fear that many rob God of the glory of his free grace which is akin to His divine sovereignty, and is one of the brightest jewels of His crown. God saves not according to merit, but according to mercy. “The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life.” salvation is freely given, not because man merits it, but because Jehovah wills it. All salvation is of divine grace and not of works. I say it is of *free* grace, and it is muttered that the expression is a tautology. I know it is; but we want to be understood. Salvation comes because God wills to save. Grace is given to the most unworthy of the sons of men to show that it is of grace and not of debt! But, ah, these knaves; they drag in human goodness or strength by the heels if they cannot get it in any other way! To spoil the freeness of sovereign grace and so to rob God of glory is the ambition of many a preacher! One drop of human merit put into a sea of free grace preaching will spoil it all. “If by grace, then is it no more of works; otherwise grace is no more grace.

But if it is of works, then is it no more grace, otherwise work is no more work.” Stand to it, brothers and sisters, that by GRACE we are saved! In these evil days stand boldly out and protest against every gospel that conceals sovereign grace as the fountain of salvation through Jesus Christ.

Now I will come closer home to certain of you, while I mention *practical forms* of this robbery of God. With too many God is robbed of that part of time which belongs to Him. And what part of time does He claim? One day in seven! He has given six days to us to use for our business, but He has reserved one day in seven for Himself and this He has done for our good. Christ our Lord has taken away whatever of bondage there was about the Sabbath law, as interpreted by the Jewish Rabbis. And by example and by speech He has told us that acts of necessity, acts of mercy, and acts of piety are allowable on Sunday. The bitter observance of the Sabbath was opposed by our Lord, that He might bring to us the true rest. Yet, in many ways, men are conspiring to rob God of the day which He has hallowed. The little which remains of sacredness about this day is now being threatened to our national injury. Give up the Sabbath, and you reduce the nation to slavery. A week without a Sabbath is perpetual bondage. This break of a day’s rest makes it possible for the toiling man to live. Alas, at this day the very highest in the land are setting the example of disregarding the sanctity of the Lord’s-Day! I grieve to have to say it of one who has been otherwise regarded, but so it is, that, by *royal example*, the day is turned from its holy purpose. It is not only from the ribald and the profane that our Christian Sabbath is in danger, but from those whose example has weight about it because of the honor justly paid to long years of virtue. God forgive the error and cause it to cease! Brothers and sisters, we must, to the utmost of our power, conserve for God His holy day or we shall be guilty of robbing Him!

Very sincerely did we sing just now—

*“Welcome, sweet day of rest,
That saw the Lord arise;
Welcome to this reviving breast,
And these rejoicing eyes.”*

All time is the Lord’s due and all the life of man. Let us not rob Him of our youth. He says to the young, “Remember now your Creator in the days of your youth.” Young man, do not rob God of your prime! Do not give to the world and to sin the morning of your days while the dew of youth is upon you. Rob not God of your early manhood but give Him your flower in its bud. Every day and all the day; and the whole of life belongs to God. Do not let us waste a minute in that which would provoke Him to anger, but let Him have each moment, for He prepares for us an eternity of reward.

“Will a man rob God?” Many rob God by not giving Him their hearts. “My son,” said He, “give Me your heart.” He claims you; give Him yourself. He made you and He alone can save you; give Him yourself. Will a man rob God? I pray you, do not! Render to the Lord your spirit, soul and body. Have you a faculty which you only use for self? You are robbing God; for the talent, the strength, the life you have are all His. These are the pounds which you must put out to interest for your Lord. If even your single pound is not used for Him, you will be found guilty of unfaithfulness in your stewardship.

Those may be said to rob God who have never borne testimony to the grace which they believe they have received. You have been saved but you have never told anybody of the wondrous blessing; no, not your own wife! You have been converted; at least you hope so; but you have never confessed it, even to your children! Are you not robbing God of the revenue of glory which would come to Him through the testimony which you are sent into the world to bear? If all Christians were dumb as you are, God would have no witness left on the face of the earth! Will men rob God of the confirmation of His Word which a gracious experience furnishes?

You have influence; will you rob God of this, also? We have all some influence, even as we all cast a shadow as we walk in the sun! Are you using your influence for God? If not, you are robbing Him of a great gift which He meant you to use for the glory of His name and the extension of His kingdom. Perhaps you have more than influence; you have power; for you are the head of a family and you can command your household and your children after you. Are you leading servants and children in a wrong road? You are the Lord-Lieutenant in your own little sphere, and are you using that power in a rebellious manner? Do you teach others to do what you, yourself, know to be evil? Alas, you rob God! Will you continue to rob God? In making you a father, a mother, an employer of labor and so forth, the Lord has entrusted you with a measure of His own power; will you use it against your sovereign Lord? Are you a leader in society? Will you rob God? Are you a senator? Will you go into the Parliament House to vote

for Acts which will be prejudicial to morals and religion? Are you a magistrate, and will you wink at evil? Will you tolerate the indecencies and immoralities of our streets? Shall justice be the servant of vice? God forgive men who thus rob God!

Will men rob God of His portion of their wealth? I must not leave this out, for it is necessary to speak out in the matter of consecration of property. How many professors of religion are robbing God? If we are Christians, we profess that all we have belongs to God. You do not dispute that statement. Well, then, when a man hoards up all he can scrape together; is he not robbing God? When a man dies enormously rich, as many professing Christians have done, must they not have robbed God? Can it be said that they have discharged their stewardship aright when they have kept their Master's property for themselves? It is better for a Christian to die comparatively poor than enormously rich! Rich wills may go to show that the deceased did not use his pounds for his Lord, but for himself. Do not many Christians fail to see that God is the first owner of their possessions? They dribble out a little to His cause but is there not robbery in that which is withheld? They could not have the face to deny something and, as compared with their neighbors, they are even generous; but as compared with their obligations to God, have they not robbed Him? If we spend upon ourselves beyond bounds; if we lay out upon luxury more than is necessary; if we are superabundantly self-indulgent, and are not consecrating a fair proportion of our substance to the cause of God and the help of the poor, we are assuredly robbing the Most High! I fear that many a wealthy man on his dying bed will find that gold makes a hard pillow. He will endure many a pang of conscience if he has seen missions languish, the church of God impeded in her efforts and a thousand good efforts nipped in the bud from lack of money which he might have given. The work of the Lord would never go a-begging if believers were but commonly honest to their Redeemer's cause. If I plead like this, somebody raises an objection but I cannot help it. I seek nothing for myself; but I urge my Master's claims. "Will a man rob God?"

I close this help to confession which, I think, must have come home to many of you, when I say that with certain persons there are *peculiar forms* of this evil. When yonder friend lay sick and thought himself at death's door, he said, "O Lord, raise me up!" And then he vowed unto the Lord to devote a portion of his means to holy purposes. If he has not kept that sacred promise, I put the question to him with emphasis, "Will a man rob God?" Many years ago there came a friend to this place in fearful anxiety of mind. He told me that he had years before made a vow to give to God a very considerable amount, but he had delayed payment. The result, at last, was that his conscience troubled him, and he could get no rest either day or night. He was greatly relieved when he handed over the amount to the Orphanage and College, and other works. Certainly he found it that day more blessed to give than to receive! When I thanked him for such large help, he said, vehemently, "Do not thank me. I thank *you* for taking the trouble to use this money for the Lord. It is a great relief to me to be rid of this amount, for I fear I have not acted honestly towards the Lord my God." Vow slowly, pay promptly! Do not hasten to say, "I will do this or that"; but when you have once said it, see that you *do* it and do it to the fullest. Be not like Ananias and Sapphira, who kept back part of the price of the land which they professed to give to the Lord and to His church. Never let us boast that we have done this or that for the Lord if we have not really done so to the letter; for in so doing we shall stand on hazardous ground. I leave the matter with God and your own consciences, only asking once more the solemn question, "Will a man rob God?"

III. Very briefly I would conclude with REPENTANCE DIRECTED. If any here are convicted by their own conscience, I ask them not to go out as they did who were convicted by our Lord, but I do ask that while we remain here we may *feel a deep sense of shame* because of our shortcomings towards God. If in any one of the ways mentioned we have robbed God, may confusion cover us. You that cannot say you have served Him at all, repent of such a robbery of God! You strong men and lovely women who are sitting here; who gave you your strength and beauty? Have you all your lives lived for self? What? No thought of God? Your Creator you have forgotten; He to whom you rightly belong you have practically denied. Confess the wrong! Humble yourself about it and may God the Holy Spirit work a sound conviction which shall lead you to real penitence.

Next, as much as lies in you, *make restitution*. See how the prophet put it. "Bring you all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in My house." God requires that of you who have defrauded Him. You are not to say, "I am sorry," and then go on in the same unrighteous manner. If you have

wronged any man, never rest till you have made restitution to him. If in business, by petty pilfering or deception, you have dishonestly profited to the injury of another, set it right. You cannot expect to have peace in your conscience till you have, to the utmost of your power, rectified the wrong. As to the Lord Himself, if you have robbed Him, attend to that business. “Bring you all the tithes into the storehouse.” Support His cause. Pay your fair proportion of the expenses of His house, and do not withhold that which is due.

Above all things, *behold the great Maker of restitution*. There is one who said, “I restored that which I took not away.” The Lord Jesus, alone, can put away the guilt of your robberies of God! He gave Himself to remove sin. Yes, He gave Himself up to the stroke of the sword of justice that sinners might not perish. He died between two thieves, for there are many robbers of God in the land. The justice of God is appeased for your robberies by the death of Jesus. Look to God without fear! Look to Him and be saved! He is willing freely to forgive all your trespasses for Jesus’ sake. Only trust Him; only trust Him *now* and He will set you at liberty from the curse which follows all who rob God. Believe and your sin is gone—

*“Sunk as in a shoreless flood,
Drowned in the Redeemer’s precious blood.”*

Lastly, if you are saved, say in your soul, “The past is forgiven and my fearful robberies of God are pardoned. Therefore *I will rob Him no more*. By God’s help it shall be my delight to spend and be spent for Him, and—

*“If I might make some reserve,
And duty did not call
I love my God with zeal so great,
That I would give Him all.”*

I plead for perfect consecration; anything short of that is robbery of God! To live alone for Him who loved you and gave Himself for you is your debt to God; anything short of that is robbery of God. Chosen before all worlds, will you not be the Lord’s? Adopted into the family of grace, will you not serve your heavenly Father? Made an heir of God, joint heir with Jesus Christ, will you not glorify Him who has raised you to this dignity? Ordained to everlasting bliss, a crown awaiting your brow, a palm of victory prepared for your hand, a mansion in glory made ready for you by your glorious Forerunner; will you not glorify your God? Need I plead with you? No, I will not! As you love Christ who has loved you, I beseech you, present your bodies a living sacrifice unto God which is your reasonable service. Be not so unreasonable as to refuse your life, your all, for His dear sake. Amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Malachi 2:17; 3.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—907, 605, 576.

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